

## Wellness Reduces Stress During Reorganization

### Initiative in Brief

The Detroit Housing Commission began a major reorganization in 2004-2005. Lisa E. Dubose was hired as the new Director of Human Resources in November 2006 and felt that it was important to implement a wellness program to help encourage healthier living and to boost employee morale. Since the implementation of the wellness program, Dubose has seen a reduction in stress levels and an improvement in the employees' ability to cope with change.

The first initiative implemented was a physical activity program: *DHC in Motion*. Local insurance companies donated pedometers, and employees logged the number of steps they took each day. Employees walked together at lunch. When the weather was hot, employees got approval to take their lunch hour in the morning so they could walk when it was cooler. Walking helped to increase camaraderie too. While passing one another on a walk, the members from competing teams would give each other "high fives." Even members of management participated whole-heartedly. The deputy director would walk around the table during meetings, so she could accumulate more steps! The program also got participants thinking about what they were eating, and their new eating habits influenced others. One non-participant commented, "You guys are stressing me out! I can't even bring in what I want to eat anymore without feeling guilty."

The committee came up with a calendar of events that will provide a variety of activities to address employees' interests. Dubose credited the wellness program in helping to lighten the mood in the rapidly changing work environment. Dubose said, "I believe in retail therapy; this [the wellness program] has been laughter therapy!"

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### Benefits

Noted benefits of the program are:

- Increased employee interaction between departments and buildings.
- Increased physical activity levels, nutrition awareness, and stress management among employees.
- Boosted morale in a rapidly changing and stressful work environment.

*"We have a lot of urgent, time-sensitive work activities. A wellness program could be viewed as a burden. Starting with a team that supports wellness helped to make the initiatives seem like fun, rather than a duty."*

Lisa E. Dubose  
Human Resources

### Lessons Learned

- Wellness committee members that have a sense of humor and a positive attitude are necessary to engage and motivate employees.
- Buy-in from the leadership is critical. When the management is supportive of wellness efforts, employees view them as important.
- Create a calendar of events so there is never a lull in activities. You want to maintain the enthusiasm and excitement.

**Cost:** \$0  
**Results:** Priceless!  
**Risk Factor:** Physical inactivity, stress, overweight  
**Impact/Reach:** 40  
**Business/Sector:** Housing/Non-Profit

